

Contents . . .

Parent Involvement	2
Back-to-School Tips	3
Question & Answer	3
Poster Contest	4
Health	4
Literacy Corner	5
Transition Planning	6
Resources	7

Parent Focus

October 2004

New Curriculum for SSSH

By Merv Blunt, Central Office

State Schools for Severely Handicapped (SSSH) is introducing a new curriculum in the 2004-2005 school year. Presently, it is in draft form, so the staff are only familiarizing themselves with the curriculum. During the 2005-2006 school year, SSSH staff will be required to implement the curriculum.

The SSSH curriculum was developed over the past two years by various committees of SSSH staff including teachers, therapists, building administrators and supervisors for instruction. This curriculum is not in the format typically found in a public school district. Because many SSSH students have very diverse skills and abilities, our curriculum is set up in grade spans rather than individual grades. This allows SSSH to continue to meet the educational needs of all the students regardless of their grade levels or abilities. As an example, for a SSSH student who is at the 7th-grade level, it is not required that all the IEP goals be taken from the 6-8 grade span. The goals may also be taken from the K-5 and 9-12 grade spans if appropriate. The purpose of the curriculum is not to dictate what to teach or when, but to provide a focused way for teachers to develop IEP goals.

During the next school year, the staff will participate in at least three professional development activities presented by their building administrators on developing an understanding of the curriculum and how to use it in IEP development. In an effort to continue to refine our new curriculum, twice during the coming school year we will be asking for your comments and recommendations on the curriculum.

The curriculum has been developed for all SSSH students throughout Missouri to provide a resource for the development of IEPs and a focus for student outcomes. ■

MSIP Review

By Merv Blunt, Central Office

During the spring of the 2005-2006 school year, SSSH will participate in the Missouri School Improvement Plan (MSIP) review process for accreditation in the state of Missouri. In 2006, all three state board-operated programs, SSSH, Missouri School for the Deaf and Missouri School for the Blind, will participate in their first MSIP review. All other Missouri school districts have been participating in MSIP reviews for the past 14 years.

As we prepare for our first review, it is necessary for everyone to have a fundamental understanding of how and why the process was developed and what is expected during a review. MSIP is based on Missouri's Outstanding Education Act of 1990. The MSIP review is the process the Missouri School Improvement Section of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) uses to evaluate school districts to see if they are implementing specific state Standards and Indicators that focus on school improvement and achievement on a statewide basis. The MSIP Standards and Indicators will guide school districts through the review process, which allows the MSIP review team to evaluate the school district and classify the district by levels of accreditation.

During the current school year, the Central Office will conduct a mock MSIP review. Our staff will be gathering the information needed, writing reports and conducting mock interviews. Looking at we have accomplished in the past three to four years related to MSIP, we are well on our way to a successful MSIP review. ■

Parent Involvement in Your Child's Education

By Becky Brozovich,
Home-School Coordinator,
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Parent Focus

October 2004

State Schools for
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The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education complies with Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Civil Rights Act of 1991, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended, and the Americans With Disabilities Act. Services are provided without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, or physical or mental disability.

Information concerning other available resources, programs, etc., is not to be construed as an endorsement by State Schools for Severely Handicapped for any specific product, organization or philosophy.

Responsibility for teaching a child lies with his or her school, yet this learning will be most successful if the child also receives support at home. Studies have shown that parent involvement in a child's learning increases the child's ability to be successful in school. The three-member team of student, teacher and parent is similar to that of a three-legged stool — it takes a balance of all three legs for the stool to be grounded and to bear weight.

Parent involvement in a child's education will ultimately have big payoffs: a close-knit team relationship with school staff, learning gains for the student, and a sense of ownership for the parent in the school and in the child's learning process. Schools and school staff want and need support and input from parents. No one knows a student better than that student's parent. Parents are experts regarding the child's history, behavior, strengths and abilities.



While parents play an important role in the child's education, it is often challenging to find the time to be involved. Families are often busy with work demands, evening activities and trying to meet basic survival needs such as earning a living and putting a meal on the table at the end of a tiring, busy day. Families with a child with a disability have additional struggles and demands.

Often parents aren't sure they have the time to spare to be involved in school activities or aren't quite sure what they can do to help with the child's learning.

There are many small ways for parents to be involved in their child's education that can have large results. The "CAP" methods of involvement are:

Communication

Advocacy

Participation

Communication methods include communication notebooks that are sent to and from home and school, notes and phone calls to the school, etc. School staff want and need to know if your child has behavioral or medical concerns at home that may impact learning. They want to know if you have questions about your child's learning. Communication is a two-way process. Teachers want you to be informed of your child's school activities. Teachers have great suggestions for learning activities that will help your child practice learning skills at home. Ask them!

Advocacy means being the voice of your child. This can include being aware of the educational process, asking questions about your child's learning, and providing input on what your child needs to learn. Advocacy is an important role for all parents, but this is especially critical for parents of a child with a disability because children with disabilities often cannot speak for themselves and have multiple service needs.

Participation methods include attending Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings and parent-teacher conferences; returning items to school such as forms and permission slips; joining parent-teacher organizations; volunteering at school activities such as room parties and book fairs; and attending functions such as school parties, open houses and award ceremonies.

In considering involvement in your child's education, remember the CAP method of involvement. These areas of involvement and suggested ideas make parents full partners in the learning process and have the wonderful result of a great learning experience for students! ■

Back-to-School Tips for Parents

By Becky Brozovich,
Home-School Coordinator,
B.W. Shepard and Rolling
Meadow State Schools

State Schools for Severely Handicapped

"Beliefs"

1. All children can learn.
2. All learning can be measured.
3. Everyone has the right to be treated with dignity and respect.
4. Educators have the ability to influence community attitudes regarding people with disabilities.
5. All skills, teaching materials and instructional settings must be consistent with the student's chronological age and functional to the person outside of the school setting.
6. Everyone has something to communicate.
7. All behavior serves a purpose.
8. A person is more than his or her disability.
9. Parents and educators play a critical role in the lives of children.

The beginning of the school year is an exciting, busy time for students and families. It is a time of new beginnings and a time to "get back into the swing of things" for family structure. There are many ways parents can help set the stage for a successful school year. A few back-to-school tips are to:

- Establish and keep a regular bedtime and time to wake up. This practice can take some time to establish, but it is worthwhile in the long run. Students who come to school well rested are more able to learn. Parents can benefit from having some quiet time at the end of the day when the child is sleeping, which helps with "refueling" for the next day!
- Be sure your child has a nutritional breakfast each morning.
- Prepare all items needed for school the evening before because mornings can be challenging! For example, prepare backpacks, communication books, permission slips, articles of clothing and breakfast dishes. Missing one sock in the morning can often cost 10 extra minutes. Total preparation the night before is especially helpful if any of you are not "morning people."
- Write out a time schedule (with or without pictures) if your family is really crunched for time in the morning. A time schedule will give you an idea of just how much time there is (or is not!) in the mornings before school. It also can help children feel a sense of participation in this process if they can see pictures or hear about their start to the day. An example:
6:45 Wake up and get dressed.
7:00 Wake up Johnny, and help him get dressed.
7:15 Wake up Janet (student's sister). Feed Johnny.
7:30 Get Johnny ready for bus.
7:40 Take Johnny outside to wait for bus.
7:50 Johnny's bus comes.
8:00 Take Janet to school.
- Before your child leaves for school, talk to him or her about the upcoming day at school. Give your child a hug, and tell him or her to have a great day at school!
- Have a routine for after school. For example, backpacks opened, communication books taken out, backpacks placed in the same location each day and snack time.
- After your child returns home from school, talk about the day! Give your child a hug and say you are glad to see him or her! ■

Question and Answer

Q: Why is a doctor's order required for the administration of over-the-counter (OTC) medications?

A: Many people think that because a medication can be bought over the counter it comes without risk. In fact, common OTCs can cause serious, even deadly, side effects. OTCs are often powerful medications. Some of these medications were available only by prescription just a short time ago. Many of our students have chronic medical conditions that can put them at an even higher risk of having a bad experience with an over-the-counter medication. To provide maximum safety and guard the health of our students, the State Schools for Severely Handicapped requires a doctor's order for all medications administered to our students during school hours, including prescription and over-the-counter medications and herbal supplements. ■

This section is intended to answer questions commonly raised by parents. Questions should be forwarded to Stephanie Brooks at the address on the back cover.

School Bus Poster Contest

By Stephanie Brooks,
Central Office

This year six SSSH schools participated in the annual Missouri Association of Pupil Transportation poster contest: Trails West, Cedar Ridge, Special Acres, Citadel, Mississippi Valley and Gateway/Hubert Wheeler. These schools submitted a total of 23 posters.

The first-place winner in the special education category was a student from Cedar Ridge State School. A student from Gateway/Hubert Wheeler State School won second place, and a student from Trails West had the third-place poster. Congratulations to all the students who created a poster for this contest. ■



The winning poster –
“Flashing Red Means
Stop Ahead.”

HEALTH

Risks That Can Lead to Oral Problems

By Claudia Rampley,
Central Office

Many children with special needs are extremely susceptible to dental disease or oral injury, while others require medication or special diets that may be detrimental to dental health.

Risks That Can Lead to Oral Problems

- Any physical handicap, serious medical illness or developmental problem that prevents someone from effectively cleaning his or her own mouth.
- Lack of effective daily hygiene by caregivers (parents, daily care staff, etc.).
- Behaviors (of the person with special needs) that limit caregivers from providing thorough oral hygiene (e.g., struggling, kicking, head turning, refusal to open his or her mouth, reaching to pull hands of a caregiver who is providing mouth care).
- Frequent eating of carbohydrates, starches and nutritional supplements. Diet limited to soft or pureed foods.
- Using sugars and starches for behavior reinforcements in school programs or as behavior control in the home.
- Frequent use of oral medicines that contain sugars.
- Dependence on nursing bottles (e.g., milk, formula) for feeding instead of age-appropriate foods.
- Poor chewing and swallowing that results in foods remaining in the mouth.
- Repeated vomiting or bringing swallowed foods and/or stomach acids into the mouth.
- Lack of professional dental care for tooth decay and dental checkups.
- Medications (anti-seizure or behavior control) that may cause dry mouth, ulcers or gum swelling.
- Crowded teeth, which make it more difficult for oral cleaning.
- Drooling.
- Self-abuse behaviors.
- Birth defect that makes feeding difficult (e.g., cleft palate) or limits proper chewing.

Dental checkups are very important to your child's overall health. Your child's oral health will determine much of his or her general health and daily comfort. Your child's school nurse will provide an oral screening during the school year and share the findings with you. The oral screening at school should not replace a thorough dental checkup by a dentist. Please include a yearly dental check up for your child's health and to maintain a healthy smile. ■

THE BIG BEARS

Book Review by Janelle Burch, Supervisor for Instruction

By Melvin Berger
Newbridge Educational Publishing
333 East 38th Street, New York, NY 10016
www.newbridgeonline.com
Book: \$24.95

THE STUDENTS AT NEW DAWN STATE School enjoyed a lesson and activities presented by Candy Birdsong, the Primary I classroom teacher. She was assisted by the students in her classroom as she read the oversized book *The Big Bears* as part of a thematic unit on The Zoo.

The lesson was highly interactive. Ms. Birdsong led the group through the story as her students demonstrated the appropriate actions to go along with the story. This demonstration served as a cue for the other students to participate.

Different stuffed bears were used to depict the differences in polar bears, grizzly bears, black bears and giant pandas.

In the book, the bears used their claws,

cuddled, fed their cubs, ate, nibbled, slept, played, caught fish and looked for a den.

The Primary 1 students demonstrated all of the actions on cue and practiced the skills of responding to a visual stimulus, reaching, maintaining sitting balance, performing balance activities, rolling, sitting and walking.

All of the students were attentive, active and involved in this 30-minute lesson. The pace moved slowly enough to give everyone a chance to experience the movement activities and to look at the pictures in the “BIG” book as the teacher read the story. Learning was fun through this movement-based, interactive lesson.

Shared Reading With Oversized Books

You might like to look for oversized books to share with your child at home.

Suggested uses of nonfiction books are:

- Talking about the topic and the cover photo.
- Reading the book aloud.
- Asking questions to stimulate your child’s participation.
- Stopping to look at photos or pictures closely.
- Asking your child to predict what will happen on the next page or ask questions.

TRANSITION PLANNING

“Workshop Connection”

*By Daniel Blakely,
Home-School Coordinator,
Helen Davis State School*

During the past year at Helen Davis State School, we were given the opportunity to develop and implement our “Work Connection” instructional-based work development program. Graduates of our school generally enter into the work force or participate in various organized community-based activities. We recognize the fact that employment is often more than just a source of income for individuals. A general focus of the work-experience program incorporated the promotion of self-esteem, inclusion and contribution back to the community. Through employment-based instruction, students are given the chance to take the initial steps toward reaching lifelong dreams. The Work Connection program is one way we help students realize these hopes and goals.

Last year each student participant focused on predetermined goals/skills that had been developed through the IEP process. Instructors from our school assisted students directly at specific work-site locations for the time they were contributing to the business or organization. This practical approach to on-site training provided students the ability to strengthen existing vocational skills that are often conducive to obtaining gainful employment. In addition, job exploration sites helped prepare students for future vocational work assessments through the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.

Contacts were established with each work site to ensure clear transfer and sharing of information throughout each student’s experience. Effective preplanning was key in defining the amount of work time expected in relation to the specific work duties and tasks. We reviewed factors such as the use of work-development stages to promote endurance, skill maintenance and preparedness for job assessment. Worksite considerations included the following criteria: accessibility, capacity for growth, diversity of job skills tasks and managerial hierarchy prior to selection. During the predevelopment process, we explored variables such as noise level, physical layout and temperature controls. In addition, we developed documentation to assist with clarifying roles and work expectations and to evaluate participant satisfaction with meeting the defined outcomes.

The ultimate goal of the Work Connection program is to help individuals recognize and build upon their abilities and to help them take purposeful steps toward becoming active, contributing participants within their communities.

One student who benefited from the Work Connection program worked at Midland Empire Resources for Independent Living (MERIL) putting together vials of life. MERIL was one of her chosen employment sites. She was featured in their summer newsletter for the Northwest Region of Missouri. The article focused on her efforts and progress toward her goal of entering the workforce. ■

Selective Service Registration

*By Stephanie Brooks,
Central Office*

If your son is now 18 years old, he may need to register for Selective Service. Almost all male U.S. citizens, regardless of where they live, and male immigrant aliens residing in the U.S. are required to be registered with Selective Service if they are at least 18 years old but are not yet 26 years old.

This requirement does not exempt disabled males unless they are:

- Incarcerated, hospitalized or institutionalized for medical reasons, or
- Continually confined to a residence, institution or hospital.

Those men who are handicapped mentally or physically but still able to function in public with or without assistance must be registered. Men with disabilities that would disqualify them from military service still must register with Selective Service. Selective Service does not presently have authority to classify men, so even men with obvious handicaps must register now; if needed, classifications would be determined later.

There are two simple ways to register:

- Register online at www.sss.gov/regist.htm
- Selective Service “mail-back” registration forms are available at any U.S. Post Office. The form needs to be filled out, signed and mailed to Selective Service. You may help your son fill out the registration form if he can’t do it himself. ■

RESOURCES FOR PARENTS

Calendar of Events

MPACT Training for Parents. "Understanding the IEP Process." Duane Hensley Jackson County Board Building, 8508 Hillcrest Road, Kansas City. **Nov. 9, 2004.** 6-9 p.m. For more details, call 1-800-743-7634 or visit www.ptimpact.com/training/training.htm on the Web.

The 8th Annual Mid-America Conference on Children with Special Health Needs. "Life Stories: Surmounting Personal Challenges." Sponsored by Children's Benefits Services for Families. Kansas City Downtown Marriott. **Nov. 17, 2004.** Special rates for parents (\$35 per person; \$60 per couple); professional rate \$100. Rates include lunch. For more information or to register, call (816) 931-8687.

"Advocacy in Special Education." **Online** course free to parents of a child with a disability. The class offers information on laws related to special education and ideas on advocating for a child with a disability. To register, e-mail advocacy@tc.columbia.edu.

EFFECT Parent Support Group. This **support group** is very active in the Kansas City area. They produce a newsletter, sponsor a support group and offer ongoing activities. Contact information: (816) 537-5951 or www.effect.org.

Visions of Hope (Vision con Esperanza). A **support group** for Hispanic families with a child with a disability. Contact information: (816) 235-1771 or e-mail casasm@umkc.edu. ■

SSSH on the Web

By Beth Hale,
Central Office

State Schools for Severely Handicapped has given its Web site a new look. There are many new user-friendly features to assist schools and parents in the education of children enrolled in SSSH. Such resources include:

- the current school calendar
- *Parent Focus* newsletter
- a link to many informative Web sites regarding children with disabilities
- a virtual art gallery of the student art displayed in Central Office
- SSSH Curriculum – *draft format*
- Teaching Resource Guide

We hope the information is helpful to you. Check back periodically as we are adding new information and resources as they become available. The site can be viewed at dese.mo.gov/divspced/stateschools/. ■

Missouri Developmental Disability Resource Center

The center's toll-free phone number is 1-800-444-0821. The Parent Coordinator, Jenny Hatfield-Reed, will provide referrals to support groups and agencies. The center has someone who speaks Spanish and can assist Hispanic families with questions.

The Missouri Developmental Disability Resource Center (MODDRC) Web site, at www.moddrc.com, offers extensive resources for parents of students with disabilities. The site is divided into five resource areas:

- **Getting Developmental Disabilities Information.** The "Fast Facts" section provides brief information on specific disabilities and disability topics. The "Information on Disability Topics" section covers a wide range of specific disabilities and disability topics and gives background information on each topic as well as connections to state resources, support groups and related associations.
- **Disability Resources.** This area features national and Missouri support groups for various disabilities and additional online resources related to developmental disabilities.
- **Connecting to Services.** Connections are provided to the Missouri Department of Mental Health and their 11 Regional Centers; the University of Missouri-Kansas City Institute for Human Development; the Missouri Planning Council (MPC) for Developmental Disabilities; Missouri Parents ACT; and Missouri Protection and Advocacy.
- **Peer Support.** This section highlights three groups that support parents, family members and people with developmental disabilities: Sharing our Strengths Support Matching Network, People First of Missouri and Parent Policy Partners (PPP).
- **Leadership Development.** This section features three organizations that monitor and improve the quality of services provided to people with developmental disabilities: MO Alliance for Individuals and Developmental Disabilities (MOAIDD), Partners in Policy Making and Missouri Community Advocates Network (MoCAN). ■



STATE SCHOOLS FOR SEVERELY HANDICAPPED
Missouri Department of Elementary
and Secondary Education

• • •

Web site: dese.mo.gov/divspeced/stateschools/

NOTE: If you have items of interest for the *Parent Focus*, please call 573-751-0706 (Missouri Relay 800-735-2966) or forward them to: Stephanie Brooks, State Schools for Severely Handicapped, P.O. Box 480, Jefferson City, Missouri 65102-0480. E-mail: Stephanie.Brooks@dese.mo.gov